

# Southeast Region Workforce Management Plan

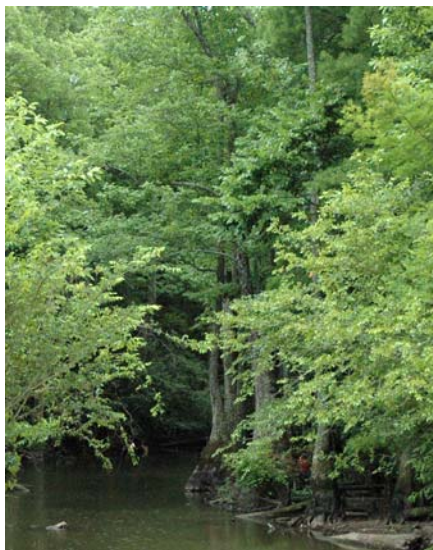
*October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2009*  
*“Where Wildlife Comes First”*

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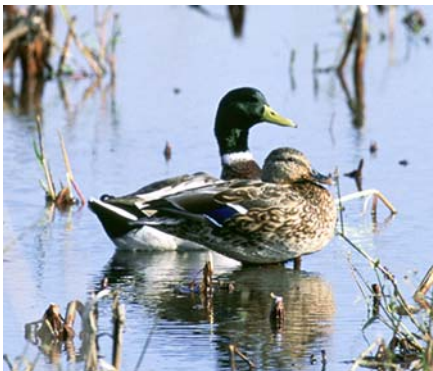
*John & Karen Hollingsworth*



*Garry Tucker / USFWS*



*Gene Nieminen*



*The nationwide budget decline in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the ever rising cost to conduct business, continue to erode Southeast Region Refuges' management capability, affecting the ability of our 128 refuges to complete mission critical functions and achieve purposes for which they were established. The continued projection of flat or declining budgets requires a strategic financial and human resource plan that does not compromise the Service's core mission.*

Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton and Regional Refuge Chief Jon Andrew established three Teams to address these issues for refuges in the Southeast. The teams established were:

- (1) Field Review Team,
- (2) Regional Office Review Team, and
- (3) Outreach Team

The Field Team developed a three year plan that will strategically guide the Region through a period of flat or declining budgets. The Regional Office Team addressed the Director's charge to reduce the Regional Office by 10% within two years and move those dollar savings to the field. The Outreach Team will provide information to our employees; Friend's Groups; State, Federal, and non-government partners; Congressional; and other interested parties; as we implement these plans.

The draft reports for the Field Team and the Regional Office Team were written separately to avoid confusion and provide as clear an understanding of the information as possible.

The draft reports were reviewed by the Regional Office Management Team and sent out to all Refuge Managers for review and comment. Each of the four geographic Areas

held field meetings with their Refuge Supervisor to discuss the draft field plan. Every refuge manager was asked to attend. Chief Jon Andrew and others provided overall information and guidance through a conference call to each of the four sites. Everyone given copies of the plan was asked to review and provide comments. All of the comments received from the field were summarized and provided to the Regional Chief to consider for final decisions. Additional changes to the Plan were made to align with national guidance provided in the August 25, 2006, memorandum from the Director.

Some of the key national decisions were to have only three tiers of refuges, whereas our Regional draft plan had four tiers. The definitions of the tiers were changed. This forced the Chief to adjust refuges within tiers based on the new definitions. This guidance clearly directed the Regions to use a three-year window as the time frame for their plans. The two draft plans are now combined into one final Southeast Region Workforce Management Plan for Refuges.

This plan will strive to increase management efficiency by doing fewer things better while ensuring management capability on refuges and manager control of budgets. The plan strives to meet Director Dale Hall's challenge to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees (May 4, 2006) to develop a vision for the future that is "focused, efficient, integrated, and united."

### *Workforce Planning Team Members*

#### **Field Review Team**

Ricky Ingram – Refuge Supervisor, Atlanta Regional Office (Overall Lead and Field Lead)

Mike Bryant – Refuge Manager Alligator River NWR Complex, NC

Durwin Carter – Refuge Manager Grand Bay NWR, AL/MS

Layne Hamilton – Refuge Manager Florida Panther/Ten Thousand Islands NWRs, FL

Ron Hight – Refuge Manager Merritt Island NWR Complex, FL

Brett Hunter – Refuge Manager Red River NWR, LA

Chuck Hunter – Chief, Division of Planning & Resource Management, Atlanta Regional Office (RO)

Michael Johnson – Refuge Manager Clarks River NWR, KY

David Lucas – Chief, Division of Information Management, Atlanta RO

Mark Purcell – Refuge Manager Santee NWR, SC

Kelly Purkey – Assistant Refuge Supervisor, Atlanta RO

David Viker – Chief, Division of Migratory Birds, Atlanta RO

#### **Regional Office Review Team**

Mark Musaus – Refuge Manager Loxahatchee/Hobe Sound NWRs, FL (Lead)

Lyne Askins – Refuge Manager Caroline Sandhills/Pee Dee NWRs, SC/NC

Rick Huffines – Chief, Office of Refuge Law Enforcement, Atlanta RO

Rob Jess – Refuge Manager Ding Darling NWR Complex, FL

Larry Mallard – Refuge Manager White River NWR, AR

Steve Miller – Refuge Manager Mountain Longleaf/Cahaba/Watercress Darter NWRs, AL

#### **Outreach Team**

Jeff Fleming – Assistant Regional Director, External Affairs, Atlanta RO

Kyla Hastie – Regional Native American Liaison/Partnerships, External Affairs, Ecological Services Office, Athens, GA

Tom Mackenzie – Chief, Media Relations, External Affairs, Atlanta RO

Bonnie Strawser – Outdoor Recreation Planner, Alligator River NWR Complex, NC

Garry Tucker – Chief, Division of Visitor Services, Atlanta RO

Kristi Watkins – Congressional & Legislative Affairs Specialist, External Affairs, Atlanta RO

Susan White – Assistant Refuge Supervisor, Atlanta RO

Dorn Whitmore – Assistant Refuge Manager, Merritt Island NWR Complex, FL

# Southeast Region Workforce Management Report

The National Wildlife Refuge System has reached a difficult period that requires a comprehensive strategic financial and human resource plan. In May 2006, the Service Directorate requested that each regional national wildlife refuge program complete a workforce analysis to address this situation nationally. In conjunction with national workforce planning initiatives, Director Hall charged the Regional Directors to achieve a 10% reduction in Regional Office (RO) positions (FTEs) with the savings used to minimize the impacts of anticipated budget cuts at the field station level. This plan is a tool to effectively manage budgetary decreases/increases and better align current staffing resources to mission priorities in this challenging time for the Refuge System.

Although there is much discussion about the impact of declining budgets, the changes we currently face are much larger than a few years of budget cuts. Refuges in the Southeast Region are faced with an increasing human population, exploding invasive species problems, increasing workloads associated with new technologies, fragmentation of ecosystems through urban sprawl, impacts associated with climate change, and increasing conflicts between wildlife and humans as the landscape changes.

**The importance of national wildlife refuges has never been greater and our management resources have never been stretched thinner. This plan is designed to address the management challenges facing national wildlife refuges in the Southeast Region over the next three years.**

## Purpose

The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act directed the Service to manage national wildlife refuges with the principle goal of conserving wildlife resources for current and future generations. Trust resource management and protection of existing resources are the priority focus of the plan, with

lesser emphasis on managing public use activities. The plan identifies three tiers of refuges, which are defined further in the document:

1. Focus Refuges
2. Targeted Reduction Refuges
3. Unstaffed Satellite Refuges

Imperative to the success of this exercise is the development of an in-reach plan and effective communication of the proposed budget strategies to all refuge employees in the Southeast Region. Additionally, this plan will be used as a basis for an outreach plan to educate refuge friends groups, volunteers, partners, congressional interests, and the general public concerning current budget issues and strategies that will be used to manage our refuge resources during the next three years.

Between 2004 and 2006, refuges in the Southeast Region have opportunistically abolished 64 permanent field positions and four Regional Office positions due to budget reductions. This large staff reduction, approximately 10 percent of the total workforce, has allowed all refuges to remain open and to maintain a limited operational margin at most field stations. Many field stations' operational margins dropped to less than five percent prior to this position management.

The Southeast Region has now reached a nine percent operational margin that is essential to pay fixed costs. A margin of 15-20 percent is needed to fund our priority mission work and ensure necessary habitat management. We have to reduce staffing to increase operating margin.

Due to flat or declining future budget forecasts, continued staff reductions and other cost-saving measures will be necessary to maintain these margins and prevent closure of refuges and/or non-voluntary reductions-in-force (RIF). A comprehensive review of position allocations across the Southeast Region was necessary to match the highest priority resource work with our limited and declining workforce.



Mike Lockart

The Workforce Teams developed this strategic plan that identifies additional field and Regional Office positions to be abolished. With 85-90 percent of the Southeast Region's management capabilities consumed by existing salaries, the only way to generate significant savings to address projected flat-line or decreasing budgets is through staff reductions.

One of the purposes of this plan is to adjust our staffing deployment to ensure all refuges continue to function at least minimally and achieve priority objectives. This plan also provides guidelines to assist Regional leadership in decision-making associated with budget decreases/increases. The plan seeks to provide a systematic approach to properly align the current workforce with our most important mission objectives in an effort to move toward a 20 percent operational margin at field stations at the conclusion of the plan's three-year duration.

The plan will be formally reviewed at least annually to chart progress and to make minor modifications as priorities or budget levels dictate. Even with slight budget increases, this plan should be followed to more strategically deploy the Southeast Region's workforce. **No refuge is identified for closure in this plan** and core mission functions will be maintained at least minimally on each refuge in the Southeast Region.

The national goal of at least 20 percent management capability should not be viewed as the primary cause for the development of this document in the Southeast Region.



The opportunistic elimination of 64 permanent field positions from 2004-2006, plus the complexing of some refuges to gain additional savings, has resulted in our limited workforce being distributed in a less-than-strategic fashion.

The primary purpose of this plan is to realign our declining staff to the Southeast Region's highest priority resources, primarily to refuges in the Focus category. We simply must manage our current resources in proper alignment with our highest priority mission objectives. Also, the plan provides the Southeast Region more management flexibility, and prevents crisis management (i.e., a complete hiring freeze or RIF, if projected flat-line or decreasing budgets occur). The desired goal of a 20 percent margin over salary costs will allow refuge managers the funding necessary to address ever-increasing fixed costs, such as fuels and utilities, better-maintained environmental integrity and biological diversity on each refuge, and will maintain core management functions at a moderate level.

Because such a large portion of our funding is allocated to salaries, budget reductions are only attainable by further reductions in staffing, which are estimated to be \$3.9 million. A 20 percent operational margin will require great sacrifice with significant staffing reductions and will not likely be met in the Southeast Region during the next three years unless budget increases occur. A stable budget, coupled with strategic downsizing, would achieve an operating margin approaching the 20 percent goal. If budgets do not remain stable, and are flat or decline during this period, the 20 percent goal will not be achievable and refuge closures and non-voluntary staff reassignments and/or reductions will likely be necessary.

**Regardless of budget levels, a strategic realignment of refuge field positions will be implemented, because the first round of staffing reductions was opportunistic.**

### *History of Budget Situation in Southeast Region*

Due to its success and its critically important mission, nationally the Refuge System has experienced significant growth over the past century—expanding from one 5-acre island to 545 units encompassing over 93 million acres dedicated to conserving wildlife resources for future generations.

The Southeast Region currently manages 128 national wildlife refuges, encompassing nearly four million acres. This is 24 percent of the total number of refuges in the Refuge System, making the Southeast Region the largest Region. Refuges in the Southeast Region also host 30 percent of the total visitation nationally.

Though there may be a perception that the Southeast Region has expanded disproportionately to other Regions, the growth of the Refuge System has been stable (linear) nationally and in the Southeast Region (Figure 1). Quite simply, the growth of the Refuge System is not a bad thing and it is not why we find ourselves in this crisis.



Gary Stoliz

### *Use of salary savings*

As positions are abolished, a cost savings will be realized to maintain or increase the operational margins of field stations. Funding associated with positions not targeted for reduction will be applied at the refuge manager's discretion to fill the vacant position or increase the refuge's operating margin. If the annual operating margin goals targeted in this plan are realized, the cost savings will then be directed to priority staffing needs identified in the plan.

### *Methods*

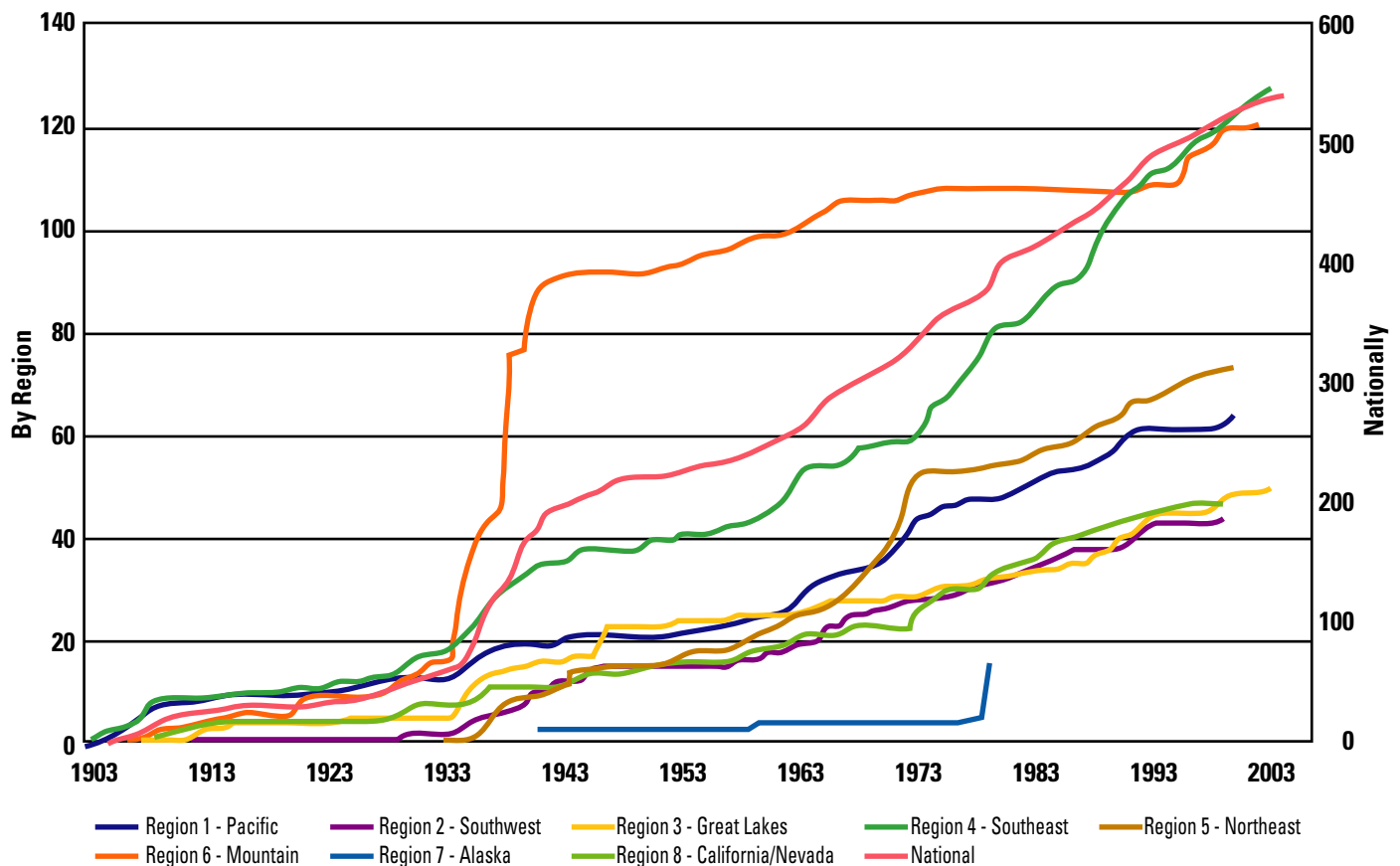
All refuges in the Southeast Region have an important role in support of the overall Refuge System mission. Variability lies in the size, location, history, future opportunities, and complexity of each refuge. This planning exercise is not intended to reduce or diminish the importance of any refuge. However, when resources become limited, decisions must be made to reallocate funds and staffing resources.

Several methods will be utilized to aid in a strategic approach to staffing reductions. The Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) have been requested for use by the Southeast Region to abolish targeted positions. These voluntary retirement programs, combined with voluntary transfers/reassignments, should provide the necessary flexibility to downsize to required levels and achieve the goals outlined in this plan. Also, 14 of the 79 field positions identified for abolishment in this plan are currently vacant.

### *Refuge Tiers*

Due to the level of complexity associated with evaluating multiple refuges with varying resources, intensity of management, public-use opportunities, etc., we decided that each refuge would be placed into one of three well-defined groups in lieu of individual refuge rankings (#1 to #128). Refuges were not ranked within tiers in order to avoid placing emphasis on one particular resource. The tiers are not intended as the sole guide to strategically manage human capital and resources over the course of the next three years.

The Field Team spent a great deal of time and used professional judgment, refuge reports, and other information to evaluate each refuge in terms of trust resource protection, management complexity, staffing needs, public use programs, and geographic location to place the 128 refuges into one of four Tiers. When the decision was made nationally to use three Tiers and standard definitions, the Regional Chief considered input from staff and then made final decisions from the three Tiers.

**Figure 1****Establishment of National Wildlife Refuges (1903 - present)**

Every Region was asked to place each refuge within one of three tiers (Focus, Targeted Reduction, or Unstaffed Satellite). The tiers are defined as follows:

**Focus Refuges**

These are refuges where the Service will strive to maintain or enhance existing field operations. These refuges are identified because of the significance of the natural resources, important opportunities for priority wildlife-dependent recreation, or other highly significant values that make their operations top priorities for the Service.

**Targeted Reduction Refuges**

These refuges are identified as places where reductions in operations will occur. They may have significant natural resources, opportunities for priority wildlife-dependent recreation, or other significant values, but their priority is less than focus refuges.

**Unstaffed Satellite Refuges**

This includes both refuges that have never been staffed and those that will be destaffed because of budget shortfalls.

Because of the critical funding situation in the Southeast Region, significant staffing reductions will have to occur not only in the Targeted Reduction Refuges but also in the Focus Refuges.

**It is important to note that every refuge has the potential to become a Focus Refuge if adequate staffing and funding are available.**

**Position Ranking Process**

In order to realign our workforce and move toward a 20 percent operating margin without closing refuges, a potential FTE reduction was analyzed that targeted operational efficiency. Each staff position at each field station and refuge complex was reviewed from a regional priority

perspective. Those stations that are part of a complex, or would likely benefit from future complexing with other stations, were evaluated on the potential to share resources, such as biological staff, maintenance positions, administrative functions, etc.

Stations were identified as candidates for strategic staff reductions only if core functions and key habitats could be maintained during the next three years. This should not be interpreted that the same level of existing work will be carried out after staff reductions, but that the key habitats would not deteriorate past recovery over the next three years. For instance, habitat work in forested areas, such as thinning or stand improvements, would not occur if the forester position was abolished. Some public use roads or facilities may be closed if maintenance positions are abolished. Biological surveys and monitoring would not be done if the biologist

position was abolished. Environmental education for school groups and information for our visitors would be reduced in relation to public use staff cuts.

The Field Team noted that further staff reductions would greatly stress nearly all stations, but remained cognizant of the stable-to-declining budget projections over the next three years. All proposed staff reductions identified are station-specific, and were voted on by the Field Team. The overlying principle to each vote was the goal to maintain only core functions and key habitats during the next three years.

The team first generated a list of positions throughout the region to be strategically eliminated. This list included over 90 positions and this reduction exceeded the projected cost savings target of \$3.9 million dollars. Because staff levels are so critically low in the Region, the team did not want to cut beyond the identified target.

However, the Field Team felt there was a need to place new positions at stations with higher priority mission work. The team voted to create a list of “add back” positions. The national guidance in the Director’s memo also required each Region to develop a list of prioritized positions to add if funding allowed. It was agreed by all parties that the add list would be strategically weighted toward Focus Refuges where appropriate. The strategic placement of the added positions took into consideration the stations’ complexity, priorities, functional programs, and current issues. Paramount to the team members’ decisions to add positions was the protection and management of priority resources.

After reviewing the Field Team’s recommendations, the new national guidance, and the comments and recommendations from reviewers; the Regional Chief decided to identify 79 field FTEs for reduction over the three years of this plan. He recognized that to try and reduce 79 FTEs within three years would likely not be feasible without RIF authority and major impacts to employees and

morale. Since RIF authority is not likely to be requested, our hope is to achieve a significant percentage of the 79 positions through position management and VERA/VSIP. If funding levels in the Region remain stable with uncontrollable costs being met each year, the reduction of 54 positions will result in close to a 20% operational margin.

## *Refuge Complexing*

The team recognized examples of existing refuge complexes where operational efficiency is enhanced by the sharing of positions, labor, equipment, and oversight. Presently, several refuges are complexed with adjacent field stations. Funding shortfalls over the last five years had already forced the Southeast Region to complex many refuges for efficiency, position sharing, and dollar savings.



USFWS

Accordingly, the team looked to find similar opportunities elsewhere throughout the Southeast Region. All stations were evaluated by team members to determine if modifications to complexes were necessary. The team agreed to form or modify refuge complexes only when significant operational efficiencies could be obtained. To achieve operational efficiency, proposed complexes must provide one or more of the following elements:

### ■ **Efficiency**

Team members considered complexing field stations based on cost-saving benefits, compatible proximity to parent stations, and centrally efficient administrative functions.

### ■ **Span-of-Control**

In order to functionally administer and manage the day-to-day operations of satellite refuge field crews, resources, and management decisions, team members limited the size of all proposed refuge complexes to manageable units.

### ■ **Similarity**

Refuge complexes with similar habitats and habitat management practices were preferred.

Following in-depth group discussion, a majority vote generated the new list of proposed refuge complexes. After receiving input from district supervisors, the Regional Chief reviewed and made final decisions.

## *Cross-program Ranking*

To potentially increase refuge operational efficiency, the field team explored the option of co-locating Ecological Services (ES) positions on refuges. Specifically, the team considered co-locating ES biologists on stations with priority threatened and/or endangered species, contaminants, or hydrology issues. The team developed a list of stations (Table 9) that would benefit from having an appropriate ES specialist on staff, thereby enabling refuge personnel to accomplish more “on the ground” biological work. Another benefit would include better attention to a refuge’s endangered species recovery program.

## *Performance Impact*

The Refuge System is not “trimming fat” during these declining budget years. The prior and proposed staffing reductions have limited the Refuge System’s ability to fulfill the Service’s mission in the Southeast Region. The true “pain” of past and future cuts will only be lessened by the ability of refuges to operate as a model of efficiency and innovation in accomplishing their highest priority mission objectives.



Larry Richardson



To document real-world effects from staffing reductions on wildlife, habitat, fire management, facilities maintenance, and visitor services, each team member made contact with refuge managers and asked them to answer two very basic questions:

- If you had any positions abolished as part of the reductions in the Southeast Region over the last two years, describe what is not getting done or what programs have lessened in quality; and
- If you were to lose one to four more positions over the next three years, what would not get done.

The responses were reviewed by the team and the ones that best represented quantifiable performance impacts of staff reductions were selected to “tell the story” of the effects on wildlife, habitats, and people when management has to do “less with less.” (These results are provided in the Appendix.)

### *Additional Activities*

The team recognized that the vast majority of refuge operating cost is associated with staff salaries. Accordingly, most of this planning effort has been strategically focused based upon the numbers, positions, and grades of targeted staff at each station or complex office. However, all avenues of cost savings will be explored. The staffing recommendations are intended to maintain the core mission functionality of the stations. The team recognized that additional staff cuts beyond those identified in this report will result in the closure of individual refuges.

In these times of doing “less with less,” the Service will need to look at any option available to maintain priority activities. Consideration should be given, where feasible, to expanding our existing partnerships to assist with the operation of programs. For example, state wildlife departments may be able to assist more with hunt programs on refuges. Volunteer organizations and individuals may be able to perform more public education and outreach services. The establishment or expansion of more Memorandums of Agreements with local and state law enforcement agencies may provide additional help with law enforcement coverage on refuges. Refuges in the Southeast Region currently have many great partnerships and the highest numbers of volunteer hours, but we will continue to look for additional help during these tough times.

The establishment of geographically centralized work centers (e.g., SAMMS, administration, fire, and law enforcement) will be explored to potentially increase stations’ operating efficiency. Although beyond the scope of the field team’s charge, a study of Region-wide grade restructuring may prove beneficial to the long-term mission success of the Refuge System.

# Results

## Refuge Tiers

The 128 national wildlife refuges located in the Southeast Region were divided into three tiers as follows: 24 were identified as Focus Refuges, 61 were listed as Targeted Reduction Refuges, and 43 were identified as Unstaffed Satellite Refuges (Tables 1-3).

While the Southeast Region would prefer to have all 128 refuges in the Focus Refuge category, funding and staffing levels are not sufficient to provide this level of management support.

Focus refuges (Figure 2) were not selected because they were either fully funded or fully staffed. Focus refuges were selected because they had at least adequate staffing to provide quality management for some aspect of the primary mission of the Refuge System. Some were

selected because of their successful management of migratory waterfowl, endangered species or various important habitat types, such as bottomland hardwood or coastal environments.

Additionally, showcase environmental education and visitor programs were selected. There is tremendous variety in the Focus refuges, such as station size, staffing size and specialization, and habitat importance and type.

By 2003, the operational margin above salaries for most refuges in the Southeast Region had decreased to about 5 percent above salaries, which did not leave enough to cover the fixed costs at many refuges. Many refuges had actually reached a deficit between fixed costs and available funding. To increase the operational margin for the Southeast Region, 64 permanent field positions were abolished between

2004 and 2006 (Table 4). The funding realized from these salary reductions was used to cover some budget reductions and increase the operational margin to almost 10 percent.

**We have determined that the Southeast Region must maintain a minimum of 9 percent (excluding annual maintenance funding) management capability to cover just the most basic management and fixed costs.**

The Regional Refuge Chiefs agreed to set a goal of 20 percent operational margin above salaries as an average for all Regions. To reach the 20 percent target in the Southeast Region, we will need an additional \$3.9 million, while maintaining at least stable annual funding for uncontrollable costs and fixed cost increases (i.e., fuel and electricity).

**Figure 2.**  
Focus Refuges for the Southeast Region





### Staffing Impact

We have proposed over the next three years to abolish an additional 79 permanent, full-time field positions in the Southeast Region (Table 5). The loss of these 79 permanent, full-time field positions is 12 percent of our existing field station personnel. Combined with the previous 64 field positions reduced, we will have reduced refuge staffing by 20 percent through the duration of this plan.

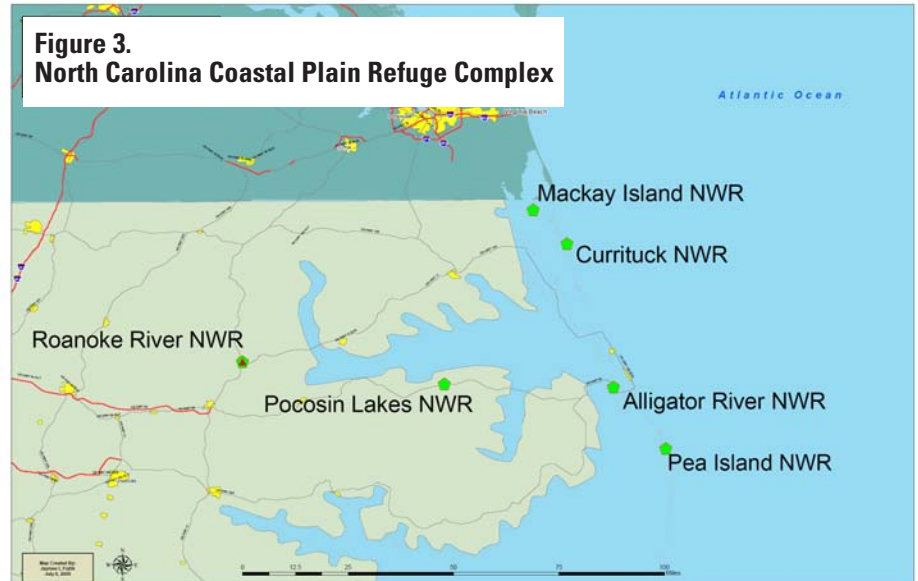
While none of these positions are excess and all provide critical functions on their respective refuge, difficult decisions must be made to realign staffing and to increase operational funding. We fully recognize that these staffing reductions will result in less work being accomplished on those affected refuges. If decreasing budgets or flat-line budgets without uncontrollable costs being met occur, then the salary savings from abolished positions will go toward these budget shortfalls first, and operational margins may not increase.

### New Refuge Complexes

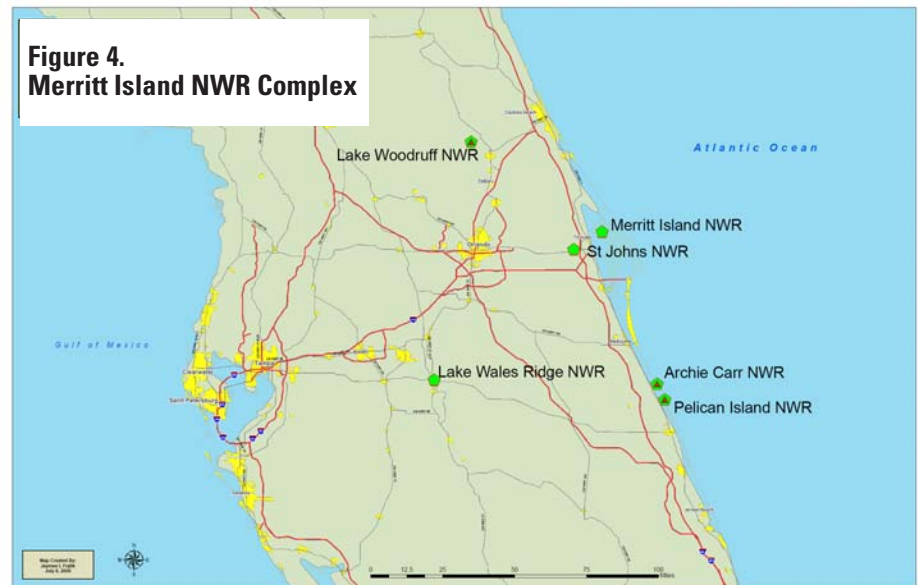
Over the past seven years, the Southeast Region complexed many refuges to gain savings by increasing management efficiency and reducing additional positions. The team reviewed all refuges in the Southeast Region to see if any additional cost savings could be generated by complexing. The following additional refuges are expected to be complexed at the beginning of FY 2007, with a resulting savings of up to 14 full-time positions:

- Roanoke River NWR (NC) will be complexed with Alligator River NWR (NC) (Figure 3);
- Pelican Island NWR (FL), Archie Carr NWR (FL) and Lake Woodruff NWR (FL) will be complexed with Merritt Island NWR (FL) (Figure 4);
- Choctaw NWR (AL) will be complexed with Noxubee NWR (MS) (Figure 5);
- Cat Island NWR (LA) will be complexed with St. Catherine Creek NWR (MS)(Figure 6); and

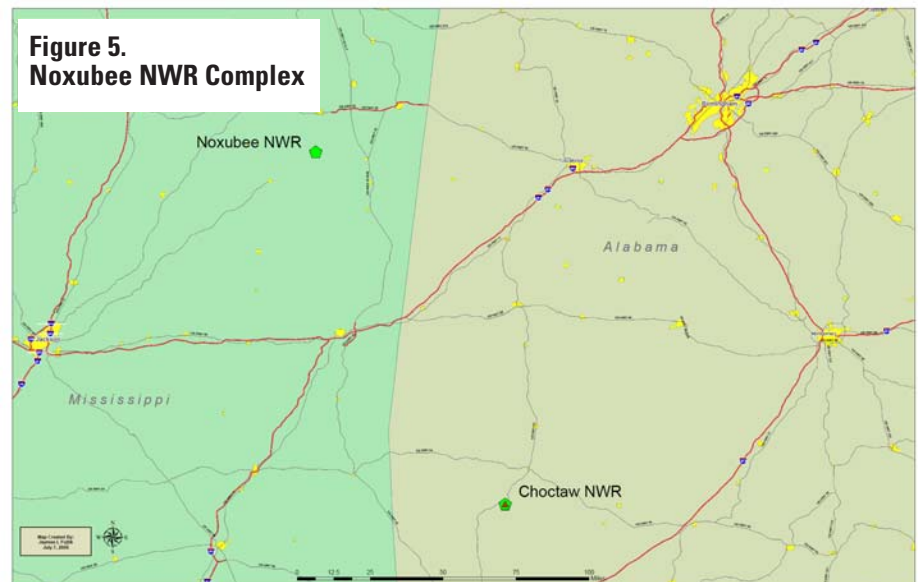
**Figure 3.**  
**North Carolina Coastal Plain Refuge Complex**



**Figure 4.**  
**Merritt Island NWR Complex**



**Figure 5.**  
**Noxubee NWR Complex**



- Catahoula NWR (LA) will be complexed with the Central Louisiana Complex (Figure 7).

This plan lists 25 priority FTEs (Table 6) for adding to refuges only if funding allocations allow. Some of these FTEs may be added prior to the Southeast Region reaching the goal of 20 percent operating margin as determined by the Chief. Twenty-one of these positions are recommended on Focus refuges or their Complex. These positions are provided so that the Southeast Region has a plan for the few new positions that will be added in the next three years as funding allows.

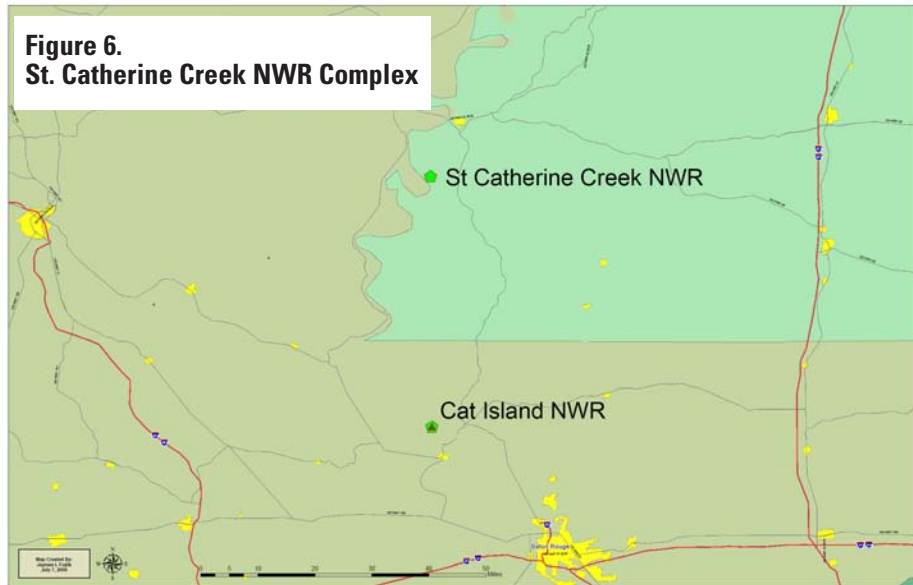
### Regional Office

At the same time the Southeast Region is reducing FTEs to increase operational funds, we are looking at other cost-saving measures and will continue to do so each year. The Regional Office will be reduced by a minimum of 10 percent over the next two years, with those funds going directly into operational support for field refuges. Between 2003 and 2005, the Regional Office also abolished four permanent full-time positions.

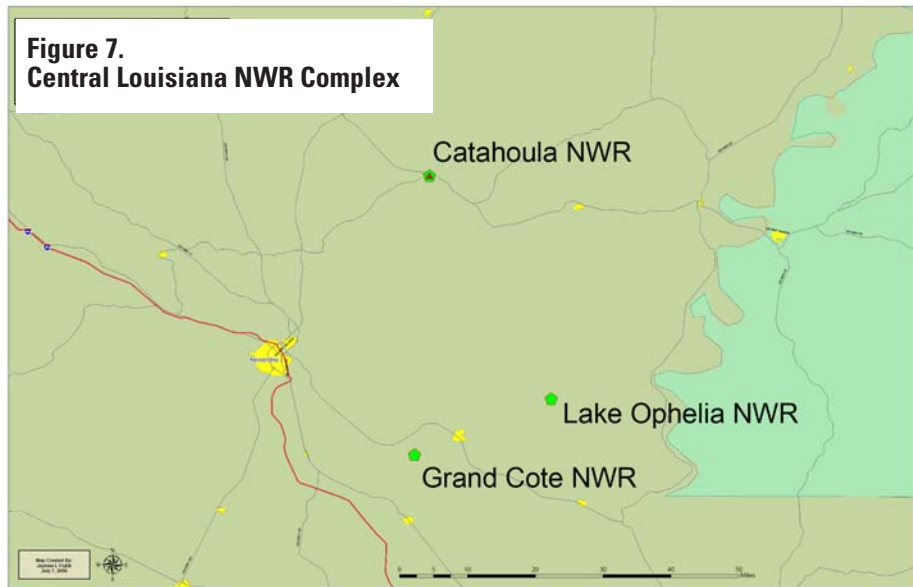
The Regional Office Workforce Planning Team reviewed organization charts, budget allocation sheets, interviewed key program leaders, and also interviewed field staff in assessing the proposed cuts for the Regional Office. While every position is important, during these fiscally challenging times, the Region needs to be strategic about reductions and achieve efficiencies for an effective organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Per Director Hall, the 10% Regional Office reduction will be implemented by the end of FY 2008.

Organization charts were provided for each division/branch within the Refuges program and were current as of October 1, 2005. A total of 46 FTEs, not counting 10 zone officer positions, were identified as funded by the RO from 1260 dollars. The Fire Management Division had 14 positions and the Division of Realty had 20 positions paid from other regional subactivity accounts. There were also two positions in the Facilities Management Branch

**Figure 6.**  
**St. Catherine Creek NWR Complex**



**Figure 7.**  
**Central Louisiana NWR Complex**



funded by the Roads Program. The 10% reduction was mandated from the 1260 accounts and did not include Realty and Fire.

In identifying the following positions, the team looked at whether these positions were critical to supporting RO operations, which includes meeting Washington Office data calls and directives, and ultimately field station support. The 1260 funded positions recommended for elimination to achieve the 10% reduction in the Regional Office are included in Table 5.

### Additional Budget Reduction Recommendations Staff

During the evaluation of 1260 Regional Office expenses, several budget items raised questions as to their benefit to the field. Inquiries were made to several divisions as to how 1260 support dollars are used (ie. Realty, Budget & Administration) and explanations were provided identifying the benefits to RO and/or field stations. Although there are reasons for originally establishing the following positions (Table 7), the team could not identify services to refuge field stations commensurate with expenses incurred. We believe that we would be remiss in carrying

out our charge if these positions/duties were not highlighted and further evaluated in light of current budget reductions.

For at least one of these positions (Grants & Partnerships) it would appear that the benefit to refuges could more than offset the cost incurred for this position. We do not believe that this benefit is currently being realized and more needs to be done to make these services available to all refuges in the region if funding continues to be made available from refuges. For the remaining two positions, the regionwide benefit for refuges is questionable.

### **GSA Lease Space**

Leasing office space is a great expense. In most cases this expense is unjustified considering the available land base for building sites and the excessive costs associated with leasing. If the Region made a concerted effort to eliminate just those leases above \$70K, this would result in lease cost reduction of approximately \$800K (Table 8). The added expenses associated with water, sewage, utilities and maintenance would likely average 10-25% for government owned buildings resulting in an annual net savings of approximately \$600-\$720K.

### *Cross-program Opportunities*

As previously discussed, refuge operational efficiency and a benefit to endangered species conservation can be realized by co-locating Ecological Services positions on refuges. A listing of affected stations where threatened, endangered, and other trust resources of mutual concern may be managed more efficiently is included in Table 9.



## Discussion

### *Impacts Associated with Re-alignment*

The National Wildlife Refuge System is fortunate to have a dedicated and knowledgeable workforce with a clear direction to focus on *Wildlife First*. As mentioned above, staff reductions have become necessary to better manage a stable to declining amount of funding available while administrative and resource demands increase. We do not consider any refuge in the Southeast Region to have been overstaffed.

**More than one third of the Region's 128 national wildlife refuges have no full-time personnel assigned to them. One half of this Region's stations have three or fewer full-time staff.**

Currently, the Region has 671 permanent field staff to manage its 128 field stations, which is an average of only 5.2 staff per station. This staffing will drop further as we implement this plan. Additional staff reductions, while severely impacting our mission, are necessary for our stations to have enough operational funding to continue to function. Important but lower priority work must go undone while we focus on the highest priority resource needs across the system.

This plan is a tool to effectively manage budgetary increases/decreases and better align current staffing resources to mission priorities for the national wildlife refuges in the Southeast Region. The current flat-lined budget situation of the National Wildlife Refuge System is projected to continue for several years.

After several years of large budget increases leading us to the Refuge Centennial in 2003, the program's budget experienced a down turn. This adjustment required a large downsizing of staff (68 permanent employees or 10% of the workforce in the Southeast Region). Since this adjustment, the budget has been stable, but negatively impacted by increasing fixed costs and other inflationary factors.

**Refuges in the Southeast Region currently require an increase of approximately \$2 million a year to keep pace with the cost of living and inflation.**

Guidance from Director Dale Hall requires that "we should be doing fewer things better." This is an important doctrine for the National Wildlife Refuge System, because historically we have strived to achieve "more with less" to the point of diminishing return. With 68 permanent full-time positions eliminated already, the Region has already begun to do fewer things. With an additional 79 field positions and 8.5 Regional Office positions eliminated, the impact of reduced services will be even more noticeable.

The fundamental basis of this report is that we must now focus our attention on fewer priority resources with emphasis on "Wildlife First." This forces us to limit our attention on all other refuge priorities, principally the "Big 6" priority wildlife-dependant public use opportunities. For example, with less maintenance staff we will be unable to maintain all hunter/visitor access roads and trails, and with less public-use staff we will limit operations of some visitor contact facilities, and significantly reduce our environmental education programs. We will also have to evaluate and reduce our current commitments to our partners. Especially during the past few decades, the National Wildlife Refuge System has looked beyond its boundaries to seek out creative partnerships that will benefit wildlife resources. With less people it will be impossible to develop and maintain as many unique cooperative opportunities.

### *Implementation*

Several steps are required to implement this plan, but this is not a step-by-step plan. This plan provides a vision that is focused on the near and long-term natural resource priorities of national wildlife refuges in the Southeast Region. The plan includes triggers that will alert higher management that action is

necessary and each trigger will require more significant action towards a three-year objective of reaching an average operating margin of 20% at each field station.

Goal 1: Maintain current operating margin of 9% (not including annual maintenance funds) through FY 2009

- At the initiation of this plan, the average operating margin of national wildlife refuges in the Southeast Region is approximately 9%. This amount is increased to 14% when it includes funding for the annual preventative maintenance of equipment and assets. Neither amount is adequate to maintain operations or facilities.



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- If at any point budget projections suggest that the average operating margin of national wildlife refuges in the Southeast will drop below 9%, the Region will implement a complete hiring freeze until adequate funding can be released to elevate operating margins.

Goal 2: Achieve an average operating margin of 15% by FY 2008

- The Region will reduce staff identified in this plan to recoup salary savings that will increase operational margins by 6% total in FY 2007 and FY 2008, which will provide an average operating margin of 15% at each field station. This amount provides sufficient funding to operate all Focus Refuges at an acceptable level for the next three years, but

staffing levels will be far below the minimum level at many stations in the Region.

- Once the required 6% savings is achieved, any additional savings or funding increases will be used to add critical positions. A few critical positions may have to be added subject to Chief approval, but these will be minimal prior to reaching 15%.

Goal 3: Achieve an average operating margin of 20% by FY 2009.

- The actions required to reach an operating margin of 15% will be extended to achieve a higher average of 20%.
- The Region will reduce staff identified in this plan to recoup salary savings that will increase operational margins by 5% in FY 2009. This amount provides sufficient funding to operate all units at an acceptable level for the next three years, but staffing levels will still be below the needed levels.
- Again, once the required savings are achieved, any additional savings will be directed to add critical positions.



The Region expects that the use of early-out/buy-out authority will accelerate the implementation of this plan. A total of 247 positions in Refuges are eligible for these authorities through FY 2007. Of the 88 positions identified in this plan for potential reduction, approximately 95% are eligible for one of these two programs. While the programs are voluntary, there is a high likelihood that the Region can expect approximately 20-30% of these positions to vacate.

If a position that is identified in this plan becomes vacant, the funding associated with that position will be removed from that field station's budget and held by the Regional Office for reallocation to field stations.

**Any reallocation will be based upon required management capability at full-execution of this plan – not current operations.**

For example, if a station has four positions identified for reduction, those positions are not included in the formula used to reallocate savings for increased management capability. This means that stations with position reductions should not expect to see increased management capability based on their current number of staff, but would maintain current capability for those targeted reduction positions.

If a Regional Office position that is identified for reduction becomes vacant, the funding associated with that position will be included in the reallocation process. The Regional Office does not require 20% operating margin. The Regional Office will strive to achieve 10% margin (not including funding used for centralized field support purposes such as leased space or PCS).

If a position that is not identified in this plan becomes vacant, the funding associated with that position will remain at the field station or within the geographic area. Each manager will be given as much control and flexibility as possible in this process by knowing in advance exactly which positions are identified for reduction and which positions will be re-filled at their discretion (assuming Goal 1 is met).

All funding recovered through salary savings identified in this plan will first go towards increasing management capability as outlined by each Goal. This funding will be primarily directed to Focus Refuges or their Complex to ensure the highest resource priorities are met. Given the need to ensure that we do “fewer things better” we must dedicate our funding resources to these priority locations first.

## Conclusion

Unfortunately, this plan proposes the elimination of 88 permanent positions at a time when almost every national wildlife refuge in the Southeast Region is in need of additional positions. The plan will over time better align our workforce in relation to our budget allocations and allow us to put a higher percentage of funding resources toward the highest priority work on refuges in the Southeast Region.

The plan will allow us to better manage during flat-line or decreasing budgets by providing managers more operating margin. At some point in the future, budgets will improve and the Region will be better poised to move forward for our “Wildlife First” mission and make every station a fully-functional Focus Refuge.

# Table 1: Focus Refuges for the Southeast Region

**Focus Refuges**  
These are the refuges where the Service will strive to maintain or enhance existing field operations. These refuges are identified because of the significance of the natural resources, important opportunities for priority wildlife dependent recreation, or other highly significant values that make their operations top priorities for the Service.

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (NC)
Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (FL)
Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge (PR)
Cache River National Wildlife Refuge (AR)
Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (SC)
Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge (SC)
Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge (AR)
J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge (FL)
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (FL)
Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge (MS)
National Key Deer Refuge (FL)
Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge (MS)
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (GA)
Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge (TN)
Sabine National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (GA)
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (FL)
Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge (TN)
Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (AL)
White River National Wildlife Refuge (AR)
Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge (MS)



## Table 2: Targeted Reduction Refuges

### Targeted Reduction Refuges

These refuges are identified as places where reduction in operations will occur. They may have significant natural resources, opportunities for priority wildlife dependent recreation, or other significant values, but their priority is less than focus refuges.

<b>Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Hillside National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>	<b>Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>
<b>Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>
<b>Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>	<b>Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>
<b>Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>	<b>Lower Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge (TN)</b>
<b>Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>	<b>Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>
<b>Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>	<b>Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Morgan Brake National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Chickasaw National Wildlife Refuge (TN)</b>	<b>Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>
<b>Choctaw National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>	<b>Overflow National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>
<b>Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge (KY)</b>	<b>Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Coldwater River National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>	<b>Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge (TN)</b>	<b>Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>
<b>Culebra National Wildlife Refuge (PR)</b>	<b>Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>	<b>Pond Creek National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>
<b>D'Arbonne National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Red River National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>
<b>Delta National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge (VI)</b>
<b>Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge (SC)</b>	<b>Saint Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>	<b>Saint Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Santee National Wildlife Refuge (SC)</b>
<b>Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>	<b>Vieques National Wildlife Refuge (PR)</b>
<b>Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge (SC)</b>
<b>Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>	<b>Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>
<b>Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge (TN)</b>	

## Table 3: Unstaffed Satellite Refuges

### Unstaffed Satellite Refuges

This includes both refuges that have never been staffed and those that will be destaffed because of budget shortfalls.

<b>Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Lake Isom National Wildlife Refuge (TN)</b>
<b>Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>	<b>Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Logan Cave National Wildlife Refuge (AR)</b>
<b>Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>	<b>Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Mathews Brake National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Breton National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Navassa National Wildlife Refuge (Other)</b>
<b>Buck Island National Wildlife Refuge (VI)</b>	<b>Passage Key National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>	<b>Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge (SC)</b>
<b>Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Pinellas Key National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>St. Johns National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Currituck National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>	<b>Sauta Cave National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>
<b>Desecheo National Wildlife Refuge (PR)</b>	<b>Shell Keys National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>
<b>Fern Cave National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>	<b>Swanquarter National Wildlife Refuge (NC)</b>
<b>Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Tallahatchie National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Green Cay National Wildlife Refuge (VI)</b>	<b>Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>
<b>Handy Brake National Wildlife Refuge (LA)</b>	<b>Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>
<b>Holt Collier National Wildlife Refuge (MS)</b>	<b>Tybee National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>
<b>Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>
<b>Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>	<b>Watercress Darter National Wildlife Refuge (AL)</b>
<b>Key West National Wildlife Refuge (FL)</b>	<b>Wolf Island National Wildlife Refuge (GA)</b>
<b>Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge (PR)</b>	

## Table 4: FY04 / FY06 Staffing Reduction Exercise

This table was requested by the Regional Chief as a tool to track the status of position management. The process of reducing \$3.4 million in salaries was accomplished during FY 2004 and FY 2005. The reduction required the elimination of 68 positions in the National Wildlife Refuge System, Southeast Region. These positions are listed below.

Office Assistant	GS-07	Alligator River NWR	Bio Science Tech	GS-07	North Mississippi Refuges
Automotive Worker	WG-08	Alligator River NWR	Bio Science Tech	GS-07	Pelican Island NWR
F&W Biologist*	GS-12	Alligator River NWR	Forester	GS-11	Piedmont NWR
Wildlife Biologist	GS-09	ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Park Ranger	GS-09	Piedmont NWR
Refuge Manager (A)	GS-07	ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Park Ranger*	GS-07	Pocosin Lakes NWR
F&W Biologist (1/2)	GS-11	ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Equipment Mechanic	WG-10	Pocosin Lakes NWR
General Biologist	GS-12	Atlanta RO - Planning	Refuge Manager (A)	GS-11	Savannah Coastal Refuges
Chief, Div of Planning	GS-14	Atlanta RO - Planning	Tractor Operator	WG-06	Savannah Coastal Refuges
Outreach Coordinator	GS-13	Atlanta RO - Visitor Services	Biologist	GS-12	South Arkansas Refuges
Centennial Coordinator	GS-12	Atlanta RO - Visitor Services	Forester	GS-09	South Arkansas Refuges
Park Ranger	GS-11	Cape Romain NWR	Refuge Ops Spec	GS-04	South Arkansas Refuges
Laborer	WG-03	Cape Romain NWR	Refuge Ops Spec	GS-09	SE Louisiana Refuges
Bio Science Tech	GS-05	Cape Romain NWR	Refuge Ops Spec*	GS-09	SE Louisiana Refuges
Forester	GS-07	Carolina Sandhills NWR	Refuge Ops Spec*	GS-05	SE Louisiana Refuges
Refuge Manager (A)	GS-12	Cat Island NWR	Park Ranger	GS-09	SE Louisiana Refuges
Equipment Operator*	WG-08	Catahoula NWR	Boat Operator	WG-11	SE Louisiana Refuges
Bio Science Tech*	GS-05	Cedar Island NWR	Biologist	GS-09	SE Louisiana Refuges
Refuge Manager (A)	GS-11	Chickasaw NWR	Resource Planner	GS-12	SE Louisiana Refuges
Office Assistant	GS-07	Choctaw NWR	Refuge Manager (A)(1/2)	GS-11	SW Louisiana Refuges
Refuge Manager (A)	GS-11	Hatchie NWR	Crane Operator	WG-11	SW Louisiana Refuges
Park Ranger	GS-05	J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR	Secretary	GS-05	St. Marks NWR
Refuge Ops Spec	GS-09	J.N. Ding Darling NWR	Refuge Manager	GS-12	St. Vincent NWR
Refuge Manager (A)*	GS-11	Lake Ophelia NWR	Equipment Operator*	WG-08	St. Vincent NWR
Maintenance Worker	WG-08	Lower Suwannee NWR	Refuge Manager (A)	GS-09	Tensas River NWR
Equipment Operator	WG-10	Mackay Island NWR	Bio Science Tech	GS-07	Theodore Roosevelt Refuges
Wildlife Biologist	GS-09	Mattamuskeet NWR	Bio Science Tech*	GS-07	Theodore Roosevelt Refuges
Office Assistant (1/2)	GS-3	Mattamuskeet NWR	Refuge Officer*	GS-07	Vieques NWR
Bio Science Tech*	GS-05	Mattamuskeet NWR	Range Technician*	GS-05	Waccamaw NWR
Equipment Operator	WG-9	Merritt Island NWR	Maintenance Worker	WG-07	Wapannocca NWR
Park Ranger	GS-07	Merritt Island NWR	Maintenance Worker	WG-8	West Tennessee Refuges
Office Assistant	GS-06	Merritt Island NWR	Maintenance Worker	WG-08	Wheeler NWR
Bio Science Tech	GS-07	MS Sandhill Crane NWR	Tractor Operator	WG-06	Wheeler NWR
Refuge Manager (A)	GS-12	MS Sandhill Crane NWR	Maintenance Mechanic	WG-09	White River NWR
F&W Biologist	GS-09	National Key Deer Refuge	* These positions were added via RONS minimum staffing increases		
Office Assistant	GS-06	North Louisiana Refuges			



**Table 5: Positions Identified for Abolishment through FY09**

Station	Position	Station	Position
Alligator River NWR	Maintenance	J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR	Maintenance
Alligator River NWR	Refuge Manager	J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR	Park Ranger
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Administration	J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR	Park Ranger *
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Ecologist	Lacassine NWR	Refuge Manager
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Maintenance	Lake Woodruff NWR	Maintenance
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Maintenance	Lake Woodruff NWR	Refuge Manager (A)
Atlanta Regional Office	Administration	Lower Hatchie NWR	Maintenance
Atlanta Regional Office	Administration	Lower Suwanee NWR	Biologist *
Atlanta Regional Office	Administration*	Mackay Island NWR	Refuge Manager
Atlanta Regional Office	Aviation Manager	Mandalay NWR	Refuge Manager
Atlanta Regional Office (1/2)	Biologist	Mattamuskeet NWR	Maintenance *
Atlanta Regional Office	Computer Specialist*	Merritt Island NWR	Forester
Atlanta Regional Office	Landscape Architect*	Mountain Longleaf NWR	Biologist
Atlanta Regional Office	Maintenance	National Key Deer Refuge	Administration *
Atlanta Regional Office	Refuge Ops Spec	North Mississippi Refuges	Refuge Ops Spec
Bayou Cocodrie NWR	Administration	Okefenokee NWR	Administration
Bayou Cocodrie NWR	Maintenance	Okefenokee NWR	Maintenance
Bayou Sauvage NWR	Refuge Ops Spec	Okefenokee NWR	Park Ranger
Bayou Sauvage NWR	Park Ranger	Okefenokee NWR	Park Ranger
Big Branch Marsh NWR	Park Ranger	Pee Dee NWR	Maintenance *
Bon Secour NWR	Refuge Manager (A)	Pee Dee NWR	Refuge Manager (A)
Bond Swamp NWR	Park Ranger*	Pelican Island NWR	Administration
Bond Swamp NWR	Refuge Ops Spec	Pelican Island NWR	Biologist *
Cache River NWR	Refuge Manager	Pelican Island NWR	Park Ranger
Cache River NWR	Refuge Manager	Piedmont NWR	Maintenance
Cameron Prairie NWR	Administration	Reelfoot NWR	Refuge Ops Spec
Cameron Prairie NWR	Administration	Roanoke River NWR	Administration
Cameron Prairie NWR	Maintenance	Roanoke River NWR	Maintenance
Cameron Prairie NWR	Refuge Manager (A)	Roanoke River NWR	Refuge Manager *
Cape Romain NWR	Park Ranger	Sabine NWR	Maintenance
Carolina Sandhills NWR	Refuge Ops Spec*	Santee NWR	Administration
Catahoula NWR	Administration	St. Catherine Creek NWR	Refuge Manager (A) *
Catahoula NWR	Refuge Manager	St. Vincent NWR	Administration
Cross Creeks NWR	Park Ranger	St. Vincent NWR	Biologist
Crystal River NWR	Refuge Manager (A)	Savannah Coastal Refuges	Maintenance
D'Arbonne NWR	Forester	Savannah Coastal Refuges	Maintenance
D'Arbonne NWR	Maintenance	Savannah Coastal Refuges	Maintenance
D'Arbonne NWR	Planner *	Savannah Coastal Refuges	Refuge Manager
Eufaula NWR	Refuge Manager	Tensas River NWR	Maintenance
Florida Panther NWR	Refuge Officer	Vieques NWR	Park Ranger
Hillside NWR	Refuge Manager	Vieques NWR	Refuge Officer *
Hobe Sound NWR	Refuge Officer	Waccamaw NWR	Refuge Ops Spec
Holla Bend NWR	Maintenance	West Tennessee Refuges	Administration *
Holla Bend NWR	Refuge Manager (A)		
J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR	Biologist*		

\* Denotes that the position is vacant at the time of this report

**Table 6: Priority Positions to Add as Funding is Available**

Station	Position	Grade
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	Refuge Operations Spec	GS-7
Bald Knob NWR	Refuge Officer	GS-7
Big Branch Marsh NWR	Maintenance	WG-8
Black Bayou Lake NWR	Park Ranger	GS-7
Bon Secour NWR	Refuge Officer	GS-7
Carolina Sandhills NWR	Refuge Operations Spec	GS-7
Clarks River NWR	Refuge Manager (A)	GS-7
Coldwater River NWR	Bio Science Tech	GS-7
Felsenthal NWR	Biologist	GS-12
Harris Neck NWR	Refuge Operations Spec	GS-11
Mattamuskeet NWR	Biologist	GS-9
Merritt Island NWR	Administration	GS-6
Merritt Island NWR	Biologist	GS-12
Morgan Brake NWR	Biologist	GS-7
Mountain Longleaf NWR	Forester	GS-9
MS Sandhill Crane NWR	Maintenance	WG-8
Okefenokee NWR	Refuge Officer	GS-7
Panther Swamp NWR	Bio Science Tech	GS-7
Pelican Island NWR	Refuge Officer	GS-7
Piedmont NWR	Biologist	GS-9
Pocosin Lakes NWR	Refuge Officer	GS-7
St. Marks NWR	Refuge Officer	GS-7
Waccamaw NWR	Park Ranger	GS-7
Wheeler NWR	Maintenance	WG-8
White River NWR	Maintenance	WG-8

## Table 7: Additional Regional Office Positions Supported by 1260 Funding

<i>Position</i>	<i>Cost(\$1,000s)</i>
Coordinator Carbon Sequestration .....	88.4
Ecologist (Environmental Contaminants Coordinator) .....	35.1
Regional Ecosystem Grants and Partnerships Coordinator .....	19.9

## Table 8: 2005 GSA Lease Space Costs over \$70,000 / Year

<i>Station</i>	<i>City, State</i>	<i>2005 Lease Costs(1,000s)</i>
Vieques NWR	Vieques, PR .....	\$196.4
Tennessee NWR	Paris, TN .....	\$110.0
Okefenokee NWR	Folkston, GA .....	\$100.0
National Key Deer NWR	Big Pine Key, FL .....	\$88.0
Alligator River NWR	Manteo, NC .....	\$84.0
N. Mississippi NWR Complex	Grenada, MS .....	\$78.0
Roanoke River NWR	Windsor, NC .....	\$72.0
Savannah Coastal Refuges	Savannah, GA.....	\$72.0
Total.....		\$800.40



## Table 9: Recommendations for Placement of Ecological Services Positions on National Wildlife Refuges

The following species or resource categories were identified where the placement of Ecological Services' biologists could assist with issues of mutual concern:

<b>Species/Ecosystems</b>	<b>Refuges</b>
Ivory-billed Woodpecker/ Bottomland forest restoration	White River NWR (AR) and Cache River NWR (AR)
Florida scrub-jay	Merritt Island NWR (FL)
Florida panther	Florida Panther NWR (FL)
Manatee	Crystal River NWR (FL), Merritt Island NWR (FL), Ten Thousand Islands NWR (FL), and J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR (FL)
Beach mice	Bon Secour NWR (AL) and Merritt Island NWR (FL)
Sea turtles	Primarily Caribbean Islands Refuge Complex, Cape Romain NWR (SC), Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, Merritt Island NWR (FL), Archie Carr NWR (FL), Hobe Sound NWR (FL), but also Ten Thousand Islands NWR (FL), Egmont Key NWR (FL), St. Vincent NWR (FL), and Bon Secour NWR (AL)
Key Deer, silver rice rat, Key Largo woodrat, Key Largo cotton mouse, Shaus's swallowtail, Stock Island tree snail, Key tree cactus, American Crocodile	Florida Keys Refuges Complex
Whooping crane	Chassahowitzka NWR (FL)
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	Primarily Carolina Sandhills NWR (SC), St. Marks NWR (FL), and Okefenokee NWR (GA), but also Piedmont NWR (GA), Noxubee NWR (MS), Felsenthal NWR (AR), Alligator River NWR (NC), Pocosin Lakes NWR (NC), and Big Branch Marsh NWR (LA)
Mississippi sandhill crane/pine savanna plant communities	Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR (MS), Grand Bay NWR (MS)
Lake Wales Ridge (13+) plants,	Lake Wales Ridge NWR (FL) - particular need for plant ecologist herps, Florida scrub-jay
Cahaba River fishes and mussels	Cahaba River NWR (AL)
Red wolf	St. Vincent NWR (FL) and Cape Romain NWR (SC)
Wood storks	Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, ACE Basin NWR (SC), and Waccamaw NWR (SC)
Sturgeon (all species)	Waccamaw NWR (SC), ACE Basin NWR (SC), Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, and Lower Suwannee NWR (FL)
Piping plover	Pea Island NWR (NC)
Louisiana black bear	Principally Tensas River NWR (LA) and Bayou Teche NWR (LA), but also Bayou Cocodrie NWR (LA), Lake Ophelia NWR (LA), Theodore Roosevelt Refuges Complex (MS), and St. Catherine Creek NWR (MS)
Cave fauna (bats, cavefish, cave)	Wheeler Refuges Complex (AL) and Logan Cave NWR (AR)
Tennessee River fishes and mussels	Tennessee NWR (TN) and Wheeler NWR (AL)
Mississippi Valley fishes and mussels	West Tennessee Refuges Complex
Flatwoods salamander	St. Marks NWR (FL), Okefenokee NWR (GA), and ACE Basin NWR (SC)
<b>Other resource issues</b>	<b>Refuges</b>
Marine biologists	Florida Keys Refuges Complex and Caribbean Islands Refuges Complex
Hydrologists	J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR (FL), Florida Panther NWR (FL), Okefenokee NWR (GA), Lower Suwannee NWR (FL), St. Johns NWR (FL), White River NWR (AR), Cache River NWR (AR), Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex
UXO specialists	Mountain Longleaf NWR (AL) and Vieques NWR (PR)
Oil and gas specialists	Cache River NWR (AR), White River NWR (AR), and almost all LA and MS refuges
Other contaminant specialists	Okefenokee NWR (GA), Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, Florida Keys Refuges Complex
Habitat restoration specialists	Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex, Southwest Louisiana Refuges Complex, Vieques NWR (PR), Cache River NWR (AR), and White River NWR (AR)

# Table 10: Change in NWRS Workforce, Southeast Region (FY 2004-FY 2009)

	Refuge Manager	Biology 0486	0404	Forestry 0460	0462	Public Use	LE	Planner	Adm	WG	Fire	Realty	Other	Total
<b>Total, existing (FY04):</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>811.5</b>
Atlanta Regional Office	16	2				5	7	6	18	3	14	19	2	92
<b>Total, abolished:</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>-9</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>-15</b>	<b>-1</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>-68</b>
<b>Total, existing (FY06):</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>748</b>
Atlanta Regional Office	16	2				3	10	4	19	4	14	18	2	92
<b>Total, additions:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>
Atlanta Regional Office				1		1								2
<b>Total, reductions:</b>	<b>-25</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-12</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-17.5</b>	<b>-21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-87.5</b>
Atlanta Regional Office*		-1				-1			-5.5	-1				-8.5
<b>Total, Workforce Plan:</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>687.5</b>
Atlanta Regional Office	16	1		1		3	10	4	13.5	3	14	18	2	85.5

\* A total of 24 positions included in the Regional Office total have duty stations located in the field.

# Table 11: Change in NWRS Workforce, Southeast Region (by State)

Location	Number of Positions Abolished (FY04-FY06)	Current Number of Positions (FY06)	Number of Positions Abolished (FY07-FY09)	Percent Lost Proposed (FY07-FY09)	Percent Lost Total (FY05-FY09)
Regional Office*	4	68	8.5	13%	17%
Alabama	3	33	3	9%	17%
Arkansas	5	52	4	8%	16%
Caribbean & Virgin Islands	1	27	2	7%	11%
Florida	14	168	21	13%	19%
Georgia	4	72	11	15%	20%
Kentucky	0	4	0	0%	0%
Louisiana	14	104	18	17%	27%
Mississippi	5	67	3	4%	11%
North Carolina	10	73	9	12%	23%
South Carolina	5	37	4	11%	21%
Tennessee	3	43	4	9%	15%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>19%</b>

\*Positions will be eliminated from the Regional Office by the end of FY08.

Total reduction in staff with already existing and proposed abolishment over the next three years.

# Appendix I

Refuges in Southeastern Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been forced to eliminate 68 permanent positions over the last three years in order to cover fixed costs and other operating increases during flat or declining budget times. All of these positions were viewed as essential positions, however our staffing levels were too high for our budget allocations. These losses were opportunistic as employees transferred or retired and left gaps in critical refuge positions at certain refuges that have been felt throughout the Region. The additional loss of more critical positions as proposed in the Southeast Region Workforce Plan will cause additional declines in services to our visitors and productivity in meeting the Refuge mission that will be felt at each individual station.

The following information is to provide some specific examples of losses felt on NWRs in the Southeast Region. This information was provided by individual refuge managers who have experienced the losses associated with abolished positions over the last two to three years, and projected productivity losses with the proposed cuts in the Southeast Region Workforce Plan.

## *Refuge Managers*

Since Paul Kroegel's first efforts at Pelican Island, refuge managers and their staff, with very little money, have done an amazing job of getting the conservation mission accomplished on an ever-growing number of refuges with increasingly complex issues. Managers struggle every day to appropriately balance providing habitat with wildlife and offering wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for people.

The rapid pace of change in how we manage information, and the increased expectation for rapid response to requests for information, are huge additional challenges. Even with this plan fully implemented we will be accomplishing less work on almost every station in the Region and will have to work primarily on the highest priority resource work.

Between 2002-2005, the Southeast Region abolished 16 refuge manager

positions which diminished capabilities to provide for future conservation of priority federal trust responsibilities, including the following:

- Inability to follow through on coordination efforts with service partners, e.g., NASA, US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), State and local governments, and non-profit organization;
- Loss of five entry-level management positions, resulting in reduction in oversight capabilities on smaller, but important refuges which are now unstaffed. For example, Chickasaw NWR (TN) lost its only on-site manager, resulting in a decline in quality of hunting, moist soil management, and maintenance of facilities;
- Inability to coordinate with universities and other natural resource professionals on information needs, issues of mutual concern, and research needs; and
- Reduced management oversight capabilities for administrative requirements, operations and maintenance. For example, the Southeast Louisiana Refuge Complex lost three manager positions, resulting in a 50% reduction in management capabilities at three different refuges with increased illegal activity and decreased community awareness of the refuges.

This plan calls for further reductions of up to 25 refuge managers (17% of positions in the Region). This reduction will have the following results:

- Roanoke River NWR (NC) being complexed with the Alligator River NWR Complex leading to 50% reduction in involvement in Federal Energy Relicensing Commission agreement, coordination with the Corps on river flows issues;
- Catahoula NWR (LA) being complexed with Central Louisiana Refuge Complex, leading to a 50%

reduction in ability to provide oversight for day-to-day management and contact with neighbors on long-standing issues; and

- Eufaula NWR (AL) losing its assistant manager position resulting in a 50% reduction of its day-to-day management oversight capability, affecting all program areas, including hunting, law enforcement, facilities maintenance, and administration.

This plan also calls for an increase of two refuge managers to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years primarily at Focus Refuges.

## *Biologist and Biological Science Technicians*

Using the best biological information available is critical to the success of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Sound science is required to plan management actions and evaluate effectiveness of these actions.

Prior to 2006, the Southeast Region abolished 17 biologists and biological science technicians which resulted in diminished capability to provide for the future conservation of priority federal trust responsibilities, including the following:

- Inability to interact and coordinate with university and other natural resource professionals on issues of mutual concern;
- Inability to promote recovery actions for threatened and endangered species dependent on refuges. For example, at Cape Romain NWR (SC) we have eliminated the Red Wolf breeding program and reduced capability for sea turtle monitoring of the largest population on the northern Atlantic coast;
- Inability to effectively incorporate the latest research results to improve management practices, while continuing to provide for nesting, roosting, and foraging habitats for migratory birds as much as possible. Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of management practices is all but



non-existent on many refuges. For example, at Mattamuskeet NWR (NC), a reduction in biological positions has decreased forage available for waterfowl by 25% (i.e., by reducing moist soil management of 2,500 acres and experienced another 25% habitat loss due to reduced control of invasive plants); and

- Inability to effectively monitor habitat change and adjust management to prevent future degradation of habitat, which increases restoration costs at a later date. For example, at North Mississippi Refuge Complex the loss of a biologist has resulted in 75% reduction in monitoring of more than 100 conservation easements. This allows willow encroachment in wetlands, beaver damage to timber and water control structures, illegal trespass and dumping, and boundary encroachment.

This plan calls for further reductions of up to six biologists (7% of positions in the Region). This reduction will have the following results:

- Florida Keys Refuge Complex eliminating surveys for sea turtles and other marine resources on more than 400,000 acres within Great White Heron and Key West NWRs;
- A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR (FL) reducing water quality monitoring and invasive control by 25%, effecting its ability to comply with legal obligations and consent decree mandates; and
- Mountain Longleaf NWR (AL) eliminating its entire biological program, which supports three national wildlife refuges and affects over 15 threatened and endangered species.

This plan also calls for an increase of eight biological professionals to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years primarily at Focus Refuges.

### *Foresters and Forestry Technicians*

Forest management within the National Wildlife Refuge System is unique due to the emphasis on wildlife. Economics is not a consideration other than in determining how to best apply commercial practices to accomplish future desired conditions based on the needs of priority wildlife. Active forest management is vital to improve upon or maintain existing conditions for endangered species, migratory birds, and other species of conservation concern.

Prior to 2006, the Southeast Region abolished three foresters and forestry technician positions diminishing capability to provide for the future conservation of priority Federal trust responsibilities, including the following:

- Inability to continue proper silviculture activities to benefit wildlife resources. For example, at the South Arkansas Refuge Complex, we have reduced silvicultural actions by 1/3 or 1,000 acres per year. This action will quickly impact recovery potential for red-cockaded woodpecker colonies by decreasing habitat quality;
- Inability to appropriately manage diminishing forest habitat in support of endangered species recovery. For example, at Carolina Sandhills NWR (SC) we have reduced forest management activities by 50% with significant impacts to the longleaf pine community and red-cockaded woodpecker recovery; and
- Inability to monitor and treat invasive Kudzu to maintain healthy forests. For example, at Piedmont NWR (GA) we have significantly reduced our ability to curb exotic species proliferations by reducing our ability to monitor commercial forestry activities.

This plan calls for further reductions of up to two foresters (10% of positions in the Region). This reduction will have the following results:

- Merritt Island NWR (FL) will eliminate its only forester and therefore its implementation of needed recovery actions for endangered Florida scrub jay; and
- D'Arbonne NWR (LA) will eliminate all forest management affecting 15,000 acres of forested wetlands.

This plan also calls for an increase of three foresters to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years primarily at Focus Refuges.

### *Law Enforcement*

Refuge law enforcement officers protect visitors, wildlife and habitats, and Service assets. Our law enforcement officers are highly trained professionals whose work is essential for accomplishing the Service mission. These officers protect hundreds of thousands of visitors and are needed to provide the quality visitor experience expected by the public.

This plan calls for abolishing three refuge officer positions (6% of positions in the Region), but plans for an increase of six refuge officers to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years at Focus Refuges. Adjustments in the deployment of refuge law enforcement officers are particularly important at this time due to reductions in the number of dual-function officers over the past five years. This reduction in dual-function officers resulted in a significant loss in our law enforcement capabilities adversely affecting resources, visitors, and facility protection problems at many of our refuges.

## Visitor Services

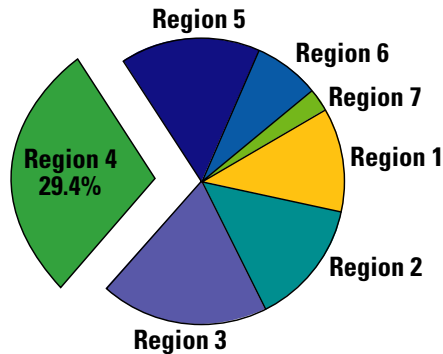
Across the Southeast Region, refuges provide year-round visitor services at a variety of facilities which are designed to showcase the wildlife treasures within refuges in a manner compatible with the refuge's establishing purpose. The Southeast Region supports the nation's highest visitation with over 11 million visitors annually. Through the Comprehensive Conservation Planning (CCP) process, refuges involve local communities and citizens in decisions related to compatible public-use management because of the direct effects this use can have on the local economy.

Many refuges have moved from being wildlife sanctuaries to conservation showcases. The public has new expectations – more opportunities to hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, and to receive environmental education and interpretation for them and their children.

Prior to 2006, the Southeast Region abolished eight public-use professionals diminishing capabilities to provide for compatible wildlife-dependant recreation including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation. Examples of the effects of this staff reduction include the following:

- Visitor Center hours curtailed. For example, Pocosin Lakes NWR (NC) lost its only park ranger, resulting in a reduction of the hours of operation from 56 hours/week to just 24 hours/week at the Walter B. Jones, Sr. Center for the Sounds Visitor Center;
- Hunting programs reduced in numbers of days and locations. For example, Cape Romain NWR (SC) lost one of its park rangers, resulting in a 20% reduction in the hunt program and a 25% reduction in the volunteer program and coordination;
- Environmental education programs reduced in numbers and locations. For example, Piedmont NWR (GA) lost its lead park ranger, resulting in a 60% reduction in outreach to the

**National Wildlife Refuge System  
FY 2005 Total Visitation**



community and environmental education to school children; and

- Outreach opportunities, websites, brochures, and other forms of outreach diminished in number and quality. For example, Merritt Island NWR (FL) lost a park ranger, causing 7,500 visitors to gain less understanding of the unique wildlife legacy at this refuge.

This plan calls for further reductions of up to 12 public-use professionals (24% of positions in the Region). This reduction will have the following results:

- Pelican Island NWR (FL) losing its only public-use staff and eliminating all active outreach at the nation's first national wildlife refuge;
- Cross Creeks NWR (TN) losing its only public-use staff causing a 90% reduction in environmental education programs (i.e., affecting over 2,000 local school children). The refuge could no longer host the Stewart County Earth Camp and will eliminate the number of lottery hunts offered each year;
- Okefenokee NWR (GA) losing two park rangers requiring the closure of the East Entrance for two days a week (i.e., resulting in a decline of 50,000 visits annually); and
- Ding Darling NWR (FL) losing two park rangers requiring the closure of the visitor center for two days a week and significantly reduce environmental education for 55,000 school children.

This plan also calls for an increase of two visitor services professionals to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years primarily at Focus Refuges.

## Maintenance

Maintenance staff provide the on-the-ground work that directly benefits wildlife and its habitat, in addition to benefiting the public that cherishes these natural resources. The talents, ingenuity, and common sense of these maintenance professionals create the economical and practical infrastructure that for many years epitomized the "doing more with less" ethic that allowed us to accomplish our mission.

The current wage grade staff maintains \$4 billion in physical assets. They are responsible for addressing, through force account projects or contract oversights, more than \$550 million in deferred maintenance backlog. New requirements to track all maintenance expenses, including time and materials, have added tremendous burden to this small core of dedicated maintenance staff.

Prior to 2006, the Southeast Region abolished 15 maintenance positions diminishing a station's ability to address maintenance needs directly related to the support of the refuge functions, including the following:

- Reduced maintenance capability means shortened life of vehicles, equipment and facilities, with less frequent preventive maintenance. For example, Wheeler NWR (AL) lost two maintenance positions, resulting in a 50% increase in facility and equipment maintenance backlogs, increased equipment breakdowns, and shortened service life;
- Delays in corrective maintenance diminish our capability to manage habitat and provide adequate quality and quantities of public use infrastructure. For example, Pocosin Lakes NWR (NC) lost one maintenance position, resulting in a 50% reduction of road maintenance. More than 50 miles of roads have been closed to the driving public; and
- Delays in training adequate numbers of equipment operators and boat operators impacts all programs depending on these certified skills. For example,

Catahoula NWR (LA) lost one maintenance worker who was also a trainer, resulting in a 50% reduction in maintenance of equipment, roads, trails, buildings, and boundary posting. The public is affected when management must close or curtail use of unkept or unsafe facilities, and effective law enforcement is compromised when boundaries cannot be legally identified in matters of trespass.

This plan calls for further reductions of up to 21 maintenance professionals (16% of positions in the Region). This reduction will have the following results:

- Ding Darling NWR (FL) losing one maintenance staff, results in the suspension of the YCC program, elimination of 12 miles of trail maintenance, 45 miles of boundary posting, and grounds maintenance. Loss of this skilled, certified heavy equipment operator with Commercial Drivers Licenses impacts our ability to move and operate equipment for fireline maintenance, which protects adjacent homeowners' property and to maintain improved habitat from reinfestation from invasive plants; and
- Savannah Coastal Refuge Complex losing three additional maintenance staff, causes accelerated degradation of expensive, essential marine equipment, closure of a wildlife drive which receives 50,000 visitors a year, and suspension of wintering waterfowl impoundment management.

As funding allows, this plan also calls for an increase of four maintenance professionals to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years primarily at Focus Refuges.

### *Administrative Support*

Our administrative professionals not only help purchase everything we need, account for funds, property, and staff time, but they often provide our only communication with the public. This makes them an integral part of each refuge's ability to accomplish the mission.

Prior to 2006, the Southeast Region abolished five administrative professionals diminishing capabilities to provide for future conservation of priority Federal trust responsibilities, including the following:

- Reduced office hours, diminishing the public's ability to communicate with us. For example, Mattamuskeet NWR (NC) lost a part time clerk, resulting in a 25% decrease in public contact, including decreased service to hunters;
- Delays in providing critical data and reductions in the quality of information and data. For example, Merritt Island NWR (FL) lost one office assistant, resulting in delays in special use, commercial harvest, and recreational hunt permit processing, NASA security badge issuance, returning and directing calls, and processing of mail; and
- Delays and missed opportunities in procurement of goods and services for specific projects, operations, and maintenance needs. For example, Choctaw NWR (AL) lost its entire administrative staff, effecting all functions with the office now closed 50% of the time. No one is answering the phone or meeting the public on a consistent basis, and fiscal, personnel, and property accounting is being done at a remote location, causing delays in purchasing and taking time away from remaining on-site staff's core responsibilities.

This plan calls for further reductions of up to 12 administrative professionals (20% of positions in the Region). This reduction will have the following results:

- Bayou Cocodrie NWR (LA), Santee NWR (SC), Catahoula NWR (LA), Roanoke River NWR (NC), St. Vincent NWR (FL), and Pelican Island NWR (FL) all losing onsite administrative support, resulting in closure of offices and visitor contact facilities at least 50% of the time. All administrative work will have to be absorbed by neighboring stations resulting in

reductions in administrative support at each station;

- Southwest Louisiana Refuge Complex losing two administrative support staff, resulting in closure of one office and visitor contact facilities and significant delays in administrative functions;
- West Tennessee Refuge Complex and Savannah Coastal Refuge Complex each losing one administrative support staff, affecting the remaining administrative officer's ability to provide timely and quality fiscal, personnel, and property management data. On a large complex this will effect more and more time of senior management staff as they assume some of these duties.

This plan also calls for an increase of one administrative professional to ensure the highest priority mission activities over the next three years primarily at Focus Refuges.